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Buy America Expo 2014 September 25th, 2014

Presenter: Today we are joined by Michael Newbill, the Political and Economic Chief for the U.S. Embassy in Kampala, to talk about the Buy America Expo. Please tell us about the Buy America Expo, why you're doing it, who your partners are, and what you hope to accomplish at the end of the Expo?

Michael Newbill: The Buy America Expo will take place at the Sheraton Hotel in Kampala on Thursday, September 25th. It's an all-day affair, and entry charge is 10,000 shillings for visitors. We plan to have over forty American companies displaying their products and wares, as well as a number of catalogs from companies in the United States. What we want to do with this is introduce American products that Ugandans might be interested in, and to introduce American companies for which Ugandan companies might want to partner, and develop, and expand their own sales and businesses here in Uganda.

The trade between Uganda and the United States is relatively low right now for a number of reasons, but it can get much bigger. The potential here, we believe, to expand our trade and investment, is significant. And we have to take that first step, and tell people here in Uganda what America produces, and why Ugandans might be interested in our products and our services.

Presenter: How can Ugandans benefit from trade and investment with America?

Michael Newbill: Well for one, trade creates jobs. And with unemployment as high as it is in Uganda, and with so many young people looking for work, so many skilled, educated people looking for work, there is an opportunity here to embrace some of these products, to sell them, to start businesses, to partner with American companies, to deliver services in all kinds of areas. There are real benefits here to create Ugandan jobs.

We believe our products are not only innovative, but they are also some of the best made products in the world. Some of the services that we deliver are some of the highest quality services in the world that will have real benefits for Uganda, whether it's in education services or engineering, whether it's something as simple as a pump or a hose, or something as complicated as computer software. America offers all these products to Uganda. They are good quality, they last long, and they are backed up by the integrity of the American business philosophy.

Presenter: How can, then, Ugandans find ways to do business with American companies?

Michael Newbill: Well first of all, they have to know what they want to sell and what they want to do. Then they have to work to find the right American partner who has the product that will work best in the Ugandan environment, that is competitive at a price angle, that has the potential to be something that Ugandan business can use, and things they need, such as manufacturing, or computer services, or a consumer product that Ugandans might want to use in their daily lives.

Presenter: Thank you. Lastly, what challenges are there in trying to boost bilateral trade and investment?

Michael Newbill: Well, there's ... Uganda shares challenges of many developing countries, and many countries in Africa. It's not alone in this regard. But by far and away, its biggest challenge is corruption. We mean not only government corruption, but we also mean the level of fraud within businesses is also quite high, and there is a lot of risk to doing business. For instance, often land titles aren't registered to the real persons. People are easily tricked, especially foreigners, into fraudulent situations. People who

want government contracts also often must pay bribes or go through middlemen to get government contracts.

It's a very perilous environment, in some ways, for investment if you are an American company, because American law says very, very clearly that any American company that is involved in, or knows about, bribes paid to government officials can themselves be put in jail in the United States.

Presenter: Thank you.